

D7
Public Involvement

RELEVANT ENGAGEMENT TO ATTRACT MORE CITIZEN FEEDBACK

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Many planners are using social media and citizen engagement tools as a component to their engagement strategy. In large, urban areas a variety of tools work well and provide a platform for continuous dialogue with residents who want to contribute their opinions. Not all communities are the same. What happens when you collect Fans on Facebook and have visitors to the plan website but they don't participate? How can planners have a stronger presence in the community to engage with residents and have them share their opinions and ideas? There are several creative techniques to reach citizens that involve a combination of in-person and technology-based engagement.

One example illustrated is in the St. Lucie, Florida planning area, which is predicted to double by 2040. The working family demographic live where most growth will occur and are difficult to reach, even through social media. A have a large student and snowbird population was not inclined to participate. The community engagement strategy for the 2040 long range transportation plan was slow to gain momentum and needed to be continuously tweaked after an initial round of grassroots efforts that failed to convert web traffic to public comments.

This session will assist planners who have difficulty hearing from those that bike, ride, and drive the most in their community. It will show how a community engagement strategy evolves to experiment with pop-up engagement, targeted social media campaigns, and citizen storytelling by demonstrating the specific purpose, tools used, and outcome. There were many obstacles such as needing permits to show up in certain neighborhoods and selecting the most appropriate event where the target audience would be receptive. Innovation with the project's online presence and relevancy opened the door to conversation rather than building the website and expecting comments to flow in.